

# THE Christian History;

Containing Accounts of the Propagation and Revival  
of Religion in *Great Britain, America, &c.*

Saturday JULY 14. 1744. § N<sup>o</sup>. 72.

*Account of the Revival of Religion at LYME WEST PARISH  
in Connecticut, continued.*

BUT when I have taken the utmost Care that none might be offended, I have Reason to think that my Unskilfulness in and Unworthiness of the great Honour God has put upon me, in making me the Father of many *spiritual Children*, has prejudic'd many Persons against it. Yet there was so much Purity, Prudence and Care in the Conduct of the Subjects of this Grace, and so little Irregularity for four or five of the first Months, that the most Prudent, Observing and Judicious have mention'd it to me with Wonder and Pleasure, as well as with Thankfulness to God, that they cou'd observe nothing worth the Notice of any tho' watching to find an Occasion. But towards the latter End of the Summer I observ'd several Things that some Persons were disposed to, which *hained* the Purity, and *bindred* the Progress of the Reformation. The vast Esteem we had of Mr. *Davenport*, in some Measure prepar'd us to have a better Opinion of his Conduct when he came among us; tho' I don't remember that any of us were pleas'd with all his Measures. Some Things which I have heard of his practicing in other Places, I know nothing of his practicing here. 'Twas said that he judg'd of Ministers, by Name, as unconverted, in a public Manner, but that I knew not of then, tho' I heard him do it in one Instance since that Time. 'Twas said that he us'd strange Methods to scare People into Fits, and did not take Pains to instruct their Minds; but I can't charge him with any such Thing among us. I heard him preach several Sermons which were as instructive and searching as any Sermons,

perhaps, that ever I heard in my Life. His Zeal was great, and so did his Charity appear to be. Yet I have sometimes tho't that his coming over to the *Main* that Summer of general Concern was the *Occasion* of much Hurt. Before I have repented my exchanging Pulpits with him : many Prejudices were stir'd up and increas'd against the Revival of Religion thereby. But after all I see no more of a Fault in that than in Ministers admitting him into their Pulpits : nor could that be deem'd a Matter of public Complaint when he was in a good Standing with all the Churches.---And tho' he did, I believe miss it greatly in some Points, and greatly prejudice Persons against Religion, yet it must be acknowledg'd that he was made a great Blessing to many Souls ; but especially to the *Mohegan* and *Nabauntuc* Tribes of Indians. Tho' much Pains had been taken to win them to embrace the Gospel before, yet nothing seem'd to have any considerable Effect till Mr. *Davenport* came among them : But the Pains he took were *eminently* bleſſ'd to incline them to receive Instruction, and to awaken a great Concern in many about their *eternal Welfare*. I greatly loved him for his *eminent Piety*, but I can't justify all his Measures. Especially his encouraging Persons in a *Lay Capacity* to set up as the *Heads of public Assemblies* ; his encouraging *seperate Meetings*, and the *great Weight* he laid upon *Impressions* made upon the Mind by Texts of Scripture about future Events.--- Yet I think none of our *new Converts* actually fell in with these Principles, except that of *seperate Meetings*, and they were but few. There seem'd to be a *Lift* in the Minds of some few towards the other two for some Time. They argu'd for them : and so did I argue for that of Impressions sometimes, tho' my Judgment never gave in to them : but these Things had a bad Influence : they set Men to controverting, & turn'd their Minds off from the main Busines, and Men grew exceeding jealous of every Thing that had the least Look towards any Thing of the Nature of *Lay-Exhortations* : even the Exhortations that are *incumbent* upon all private Christians were suspected, and objected against. And so of *seperate Meetings*. The Notion of a *seperate Meeting* was so odious that the Spirits of Men were entrag'd thereby ; and the End Mr. *Davenport* had in them, was misrepresented. I attended one of them he held among us ; and am persuaded that there was much of the gracious Presence of God with many Christians that Day. Much of the Time

Time was spent in Prayer ; and the Exhortation he gave Christians were good : I observed nothing but what was reverent and devout : But the Practice, I think, is wrong for us, and therefore I never attended another among us to this Day : nor indeed has the Practice prevail'd. Another Thing that some few Persons were blam'd for, was their Laughing at Conferences, and religious Meetings. This Practice was but rare, and the Instances very few ; and scarce any approved it. Indeed I don't remember that any one of our *new Converts* justify'd it : but whether they did or not ; it was true of *two or three*, several Times ; and created much needless Discourse and sinful Prejudice.---Some few also, who had *remarkably clear* Conversions themselves, have been ready to think that if every one was not carried along in the same Manner, and as powerfully as they had been, they might not make up a Judgment of Charity in Favour of them.----Another Thing that has been offensive is that Person under high spiritual Discoveries have several Times spoke out in Time of publick Exercises in the House of God. Indeed none of them pretend to justify their so doing, that I have heard ; but they tho't it wou'd be as little Interruption to others, and as inoffensive as their crying out, or groaning out with a loud Voice which they cou'd not refrain from.

Thus, Sir, I have given you as just an Account of the Things that have been amis, on the Part of our *new Converts*, as I can ; and also on the Part of those that have been under Convictions ; except some Things I shall mention when I consider other Things with which the late Subjects of the Work in the Land are charg'd in general. I perceive that there are great Complaints of *vast* Iniquities, *Error*, *Disorder* and *Enthusiasm* generally prevailing among the *new Converts* in the Land. And whatever of this Nature has been open among us I don't desire to hide : But I hope the Complaints are generally groundless, and Things have been misrepresented. No People, I believe, have had a larger Share of such Charges than those of this Place : and knowing that the Complaints are generally without Grounds here, I wou'd persuade myself that they are generally so in other Places. Indeed, their has been that among us which an *Arminian* wou'd brand with very black Marks ; but a *Calvinist* that has *really* felt the Power of the Gospel upon his Heart wou'd approve.

The *new Converts* are represented as guilty of *monstruous Uncharitableness* and *rash judging*. Some among us, I think, have been to blame in their *judging of the State* of others : but the Error has been chiefly on that which is call'd the charitable Side. Pretty much as it has been common in some Places where Relations have been offer'd by Persons in Order to their Admission to Communion : If Persons cou'd say any Thing *almost*, about a divine Influence upon their Souls, at once they were ready to vote them converted. But generally speaking there has been a great Reformation of that Evil : Our *new Converts*, as far as I can observe, are very prudent on that Account : they *suspend* giving any Judgment at all, on either Side, before they have that which they think is the Amount of *two Witnesses*. They don't judge of their Neighbours to be *unconverted* as the Country has been amus'd (and as, I suppose, Mr. Davenport did some Ministers) unless the Course of their Life is manifestly *carnal* or *vicious*. But as we don't look upon ourselves bound to judge a Man *converted* because he is a *Professor*, and *orderly* in his Life, (especially if he declares himself *unconverted*, and by Discourse seems to show himself a Stranger to Christ) so neither do any, that I know of, allow themselves to judge a Man *unconverted*, who is a *Professor*, and of a *good Life* and *harmless Conversation* in his general Course. Nor can I think that Men ought to be tax'd with *rash judging* and Promoters of *Strife* and Contentions, merely because they *suspend* their Judgment, where they have nothing but a Man's Life and Profession as a Test of his good Estate, especially in a Place where it has been the Practice to receive Persons into the Communion of the Church, under a Notion that the Lord's Supper is a converting Ordinance. Who made me a Judge ; or gave me Power to conclude this or that Man who was born in Sin, is now *converted*, but in the Mouth of *two or three Witnesses* to establish such an Opinion in me.

The Country has also been strangely amus'd with a Notion of *Trances*, *Visions*, *extraordinary Missions*, and immediate *Revelations*. It has been represented as tho' these were common among the *new Converts*. I have had a very *extensive* and *personal* Acquaintance with the Converts in the late Season of Grace ; and among the Thousands that I have conversed with, I have not met with a Score that pretended to *any* such Things : Yea, I doubt of *Half* that Number to be found in

in all the Churches of this Government ; but however there may be *one* Instance of this Nature, among a *Thousand* that are not chargeable therewith, we have been free from them, and, I hope, ever shall.

Have Patience with me a little, *Rev. Sir*, and I will adone. ---'Tis *insinuated* as tho' the Subjects of the late Work, were generally chargeable with *Error* in the Doctrines they hold ; and those among us have been as *severely charg'd* on that Account as any, perhaps, in the Country. Therefore, I may be allow'd to clear off that Imputation so far as they are innocent. I don't know of an Instance among our *new Converts*, but what abhors *Arminianism* on the one Hand, and *Antinomianism* on the other. They evidently *disapprove* all those Doctrines that lead to *Licentiousness*, by *highly approving* such as inculcate *Holiness*. They manifestly *dislike* those Doctrines that tend to *exalt* the Creature in his own Conceit, by the *Pleasure* they take in those that establish *the absolute Sovereignty of God*. ---'Tis true, since we have been told that there is a considerable Harmony between the Principles of *new Converts*, and some *People* that were *Pests* to the Churches a little more than an Hundred Years ago, there has been much Art used to represent that to be the Case with us : But *Salvation is of the Lord* ; and I trust, he will save us from these groundless Imputations. *Arise, O Lord, lift up thy self : awake for us to Judgment that thou hast commanded*,---and we will praise the *Lord according to his Righteousness and sing to the Praise of the Lord most high*.----

One Complaint is that *unconverted Ministers* are *inevitable* of being *Instruments of the Conversion of others*. This Doctrine, I never met with more than one that wou'd own it as his Opinion : and he does not belong to this Place. I'm of Opinion that some *two or three Persons* went a little too near such a Doctrine, but as to our *new Converts* the Mistake was soon rectified.---Yet, tho' we don't hold that saving Grace is *necessary* to the *Being* of the *Ministry*, so that if he who is *unconverted* shou'd administer *Ordinances*, his Administrations wou'd be a *Nullity* ; our *new Converts* and many others among us are of Opinion that the Case of a Person is very sad indeed, not only when their Minister has not a good Stock of *humane Knowledge*, or when he is *erroneous* in his Principles, or is not of a *good Life and Conversation*, but also when he has *not experienc'd* a Work of saving Grace upon his own Soul,

Soul ; and that for this plain Reason, *viz.* Because *unexperienc'd* Ministers will be *very unlikely* to encourage the Power of Godliness, and *very likely* to keep their People easy, (*i.e.* use their Endeavours to do so) with the dull Form of Religion. If this Opinion is erroneous, we are fallen into an Error : but not one that is to be restrained to that Time of the Church only wherein People pester'd these Churches with their Errors an *Hundred Years ago*. The Doctrine has been handed along from one to another unto this Day : and we have *two* eminent Divines that are now before me, of the same Way of thinking if I can understand them, *viz.* Mr. *Willard*, vid. his Discourses upon the 32d *Psalms*, Pages 416. to 419. and Mr. *Stoddard*, vid. his Book intituled, *The Benefit of the Gospel to the wounded in Spirit*, Pages 36 to 43, & 49.

We have none among us that withdraw from Ministers under a Notion of their being *unconverted* ; but some have declin'd hearing some Ministers that have preach'd among us, because they had heard that they were generally cavilling against the extraordinary Work.

Nor do I know of any one of our *new Converts* that are chargeable with *despising* human Learning ; *slighting* Schools or Colleges ; so depending upon the Spirit as to make it a *Shelter for Idleness*, or a *Neglect of the diligent Use of Means*, or to reflect Dishonour upon the written Word of God.

Another Error complain'd of is, that the *new Converts* hold that *Assurance* is of the *Essence* of saving Faith ; and that none are converted but such as know themselves converted. I never met with an Instance among us of this Opinion, and I believe 'twill be difficult to find more than one in the County. 'Tis true there are many that think Assurance is not so rare among true Christians, as some have imagin'd, and that Persons who are converted at adult Age, do know of *particular* Times when they have undergone eminent Changes : but none that I have met with make a necessary Connection between justifying Faith and Assurance, or a Man's Conversion and the Knowledge of his being converted.

When shall I have done ? Do they villify good Works too ? This has been charg'd upon us as well as others, no doubt. And thus far is true that some few have spoken of Works before Justification in unsuitable Language, and a bold Manner of Expression : but even these Instances have been rare, and are, I think, reform'd. But as to good Works

Works consider'd in a Gospel Sense, I know of none of our *new Converts* but speak highly of them, insist upon them as necessary, and, in their general Course, are careful to practice them. They seem to have a godly jealousy least they should at any Time, substitute good Works in the Place of Christ; but they seem to be saved from their Sins, and to be zealous of good Works.

Since I have gone so far, suffer me to mention one Thing more, our *new Christians* are charg'd with *denying Sanctification* to be the *Evidence* of a justified State. If any one has pleaded for such a Tenet in the Face of the World, let him answer for himself. I dare venture to deny that it is the Principle of any of the *new Converts* so far as I know their Opinion of such a Principle; and have often heard many of them among us speak freely to the contrary. Indeed, if to hold that the Knowledge of Grace comes by *Intuition*, and cannot be had by observing the *external Conduct*; if to say Men must know their Love, Resignation to God, and Devotedness to Christ by seeing the Operations of their own Minds, is *denying Sanctification* to be the *Evidence* of *Justification*; then we have many that deny it, and have the **GREAT SHEPARD, WILLARD, STODDARD** and others on our Side.---But I have not, to my Remembrance, met with one of the *new Christians*, that pretends a Man may know himself to be justified in any other Way than by knowing himself to be sanctified.

I have now given you, *Rev. Sir*, as faithful Accounts of the Glory of divine Grace among us, and the bad Things observable in any of the Subjects of it, even where the Instances were rare, as I am able, in so few Pages. I might have descended into many Particulars, and told of many Seasons when the Grace of God has been *eminently* display'd, which I omit, that the Account might be the less tedious. And with Respect to the Misrepresentations of Things here, I need not take up your Time at present, because I expect, by the Will of God, to publish them in another Paper, if ever I shou'd come down to *Boston*.

Yet I can't willingly have done, without observing that Out-cries in our Assemblies have been many Times brought forward by the Ministry of those that were look'd upon Opposers of the Work. I will give one or two Instances out of many. One of my reverend Brethren, who never thought it a Dilhonour to be reckon'd among the Number of those that

that all along disapprov'd of *Out-Cries*, and has preach'd against them, and I think sufficiently shown his dislike, told me, that he was preaching for a Minister abroad, upon the Sabbath, and that he spake with his usual Moderation ; and that it was among a People where there had never been any Out-Cries, and yet under one or both of his Sermons, the Assembly was full of them. I inquir'd of him what he tho't of the Persons that cried out under his Preaching, and he told me that he did not doubt but that their Distresses arose from a clear regular Sense of their Sin and Danger. Why he should scruple that to be the Cause of Out-Cries under the Preaching of other Ministers, I know not. --- *Another* who was then look'd upon an Opposer, was preaching a Sermon for me, (and that I heard and saw the Effects of) and in his Sermon he set the Nature of *spiritual Convictions* and the Danger of grieving the Holy Spirit in an excellent Light. Under this Sermon there were many cried out in very great distress. Every Sentence, almost seem'd like a Sword in the Bones. But towards the Conclusion he told the awaken'd, that if they did what they cou'd in the Use of the appointed Means, they need not fear ; for God had bound himself by Promise, to the Endeavours of Men in a natural State ; or Words of that Import. And this Piece of Doctrine as sensibly check'd the Cries of the Distressed, as the former Truths brought them forward. These Effects, I tho't, were *not* the weakest Arguments of their rising and falling from the Force of Truth and Error. Truth set home upon their Hearts seem'd to make them cry out in Anguish ; and Error greedily embrac'd in the distressing Seasons, seem'd to abate their Distress : probably they began to hope that God was not so much of a Sovereign as they had conceiv'd him to be.

( To be finished in our next. )

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